

IEPA Log No.: **C-0033-15**
CoE appl. #: **CEMVR-OD-P-2015-152**

Public Notice Beginning Date: **March 9, 2016**
Public Notice Ending Date: **March 30, 2016**

Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act
Amendments of 1972

Section 401 Water Quality Certification to Discharge into Waters of the State

Public Notice/Fact Sheet Issued By:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Water
Permit Section
1021 North Grand Avenue East
Post Office Box 19276
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276
217/782-3362

Name and Address of Discharger: Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Highways - District
3 – 700 East Norris Drive, Ottawa, IL 61350

Discharge Location: Near Utica in SW 1/4 of Section 17 of Township 33N, Range 2E of the 3rd P.M. in
LaSalle County.

Name of Receiving Water: Illinois River

Project Description: Proposed removal and replacement of the IL Route 178 Bridge over the Illinois
River.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has received an application for a Section 401 water quality certification to discharge into the waters of the state associated with a Section 404 permit application received by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Public Notice period will begin and end on the dates indicated in the heading of this Public Notice. The last day comments will be received will be on the Public Notice period ending date unless a commenter demonstrating the need for additional time requests an extension to this comment period and the request is granted by the IEPA. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the project to the IEPA at the above address. Commenters shall provide their names and addresses along with comments on the certification application. Commenters may include a request for public hearing. The certification and notice number(s) must appear on each comment page.

The attached Fact Sheet provides a description of the project and the antidegradation assessment.

The application, Public Notice/Fact Sheet, comments received, and other documents are available for inspection and may be copied at the IEPA at the address shown above between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday when scheduled by the interested person.

If written comments or requests indicate a significant degree of public interest in the certification application, the IEPA may, at its discretion, hold a public hearing. Public notice will be given 30 days before any public hearing. If a Section 401 water quality certification is issued, response to relevant comments will be provided at the time of the certification. For further information, please call Darren Gove at 217/782-3362.

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Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) District 3 (“Applicant”) has applied for Section 401 water quality certification for impacts of approximately 250 linear feet of the Illinois River (Mile 229.6) including approximately 8,456 CY of in-stream excavations and 1,739 CY of in-stream backfill. The proposed project will construct a new 3 span bridge with 2 river piers, approximately 49 feet east of the existing Illinois Route 178 bridge located south of Utica, Section 17, Township 33 North, Range 2 East. Upon completion of the new structure, the removal of the existing IL Route 178 Bridge will be completed in accordance with an approved removal plan from the United States Coast Guard. The current bridge has a deck width of 30’; current IDOT standards require a width of 36’ based on current traffic counts. IDOT classifies the bridge as functionally obsolete due to the general condition of the bridge. Based on the June 12, 2014 inspection, the bridge was classified as ‘fracture-critical’, the superstructure was rated as ‘Poor condition-advanced deterioration’, and the deck was rated as ‘fair condition’. ‘Fracture-critical’ refers to a bridge that does not contain redundant supporting elements and if one key support fails, the bridge would be in danger of collapse. The purpose of this project is to provide a reliable, safe transportation facility that meets current design standards. The proposed bridge will maintain IL Route 178 connectivity to Starved Rock State Park and Mathiessen State Park, meet the needs of river traffic, and meet local and regional safety, emergency, and economic needs. The proposed project will impact 0.537 wetland acres permanently and approximately 0.226 acres of wetland acres temporarily. Permanent impacts will be mitigated with the purchase of 1.074 acres of wetland credit from IDOT’s Morris Wetland Bank. The chosen wetland bank is outside the project’s basin; therefore, mitigation will be at a 2.0:1 ratio. Temporary impacts include placement of crane mats and course aggregate for causeway construction. There will be no excavation within temporarily impacted wetlands. Restoration of temporary impacts will occur by removal of all placed aggregates and crane mats, followed by disking to loosen compacted soils and seeding to establish a non-permanent cover vegetation. Photographic evidence taken before and after construction and one (1) year after the above restoration efforts have been implemented will be used to determine if restoration of temporarily impacted wetlands was successful. The applicant has proposed to purchase additional Morris Wetland Bank credits in the event restoration is not successful.

Identification and Characterization of the Affected Water Body.

The Illinois River (IL_D-20), a direct tributary to the Mississippi River, is a General Use Water with an estimated 3,520 cfs 7Q10 flow, at this location. According to the draft 2016 Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List, the Illinois River has been assessed by Illinois EPA and is listed as fully supporting Aquatic Life use and not supporting Fish Consumption and Primary Contact Recreation uses. Causes for Fish Consumption impairment are Mercury and Polychlorinated biphenyls and Fecal coliform is listed as the cause of impairment for Primary Contact Recreation use. Secondary Contact and Aesthetic Quality uses have not been assessed. The Illinois River is not listed as a biologically significant stream in the 2008 Illinois Department of Natural Resources Publication *Integrating Multiple Taxa in a*

Biological Stream Rating System nor is it given an integrity rating in that document. The Illinois River, at this location, is designated as an enhanced water pursuant to the dissolved oxygen water quality standard.

The Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) investigated 14 sites (Sites 1-14) in the project area; sites 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, and 14 met wetland criteria. Portions of two wetlands (1 and 6) will be impacted by the project. Permanent impacts will be associated with 0.537 acres of Site 6 and temporary impacts will occur on 0.226 acres of Site 1. Wetland types impacted by the construction include wet meadow (Site 1, FQI 6.7), and wet floodplain forest (Site 6, FQI 9.7). Based on FQI scores, all wetlands are considered poor quality. Site 6 will be permanently impacted due to embankment work and Site 1 will be impacted by a temporary haul road and work area. Impacts to these wetlands are unavoidable and will be mitigated at a ratio of 2:1 for 0.537 of permanently impacted acres with the purchase of 1.074 acres of wetland credit from the Morris Wetland Bank in Grundy County. The 0.226 acres of temporarily impacted wetlands will be restored at the point of impact following construction.

Identification of Proposed Pollutant Load Increases or Potential Impacts on Uses.

The pollutant load increases that would occur during this project include possible increases in suspended solids. An erosion and sediment control plan will be designed to minimize sedimentation effects to water resources during construction in accordance with Chapter 59, Section 8 of IDOT's Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Manual. Cofferdams, causeways consisting of clean coarse aggregates, and/or barges to serve as work platforms will be utilized as temporary stream works to facilitate the removal and replacement of the existing bridge. The stream channel will be cleared of all temporary stream works upon completion of the project. Staging areas located away from drainage and surface waters will be designated for equipment wash down, repair, and maintenance. Silt fences will be placed in all wetland areas to protect the remaining portions of these areas not being disturbed by construction.

Due to the total land area affected by the construction, an IEPA General Permit for stormwater discharges from construction site activities (NPDES Permit No. ILR10) or an individual NPDES permit may be required. Increases in heavy metals such as iron (steel highway structures), nickel (diesel fuel, asphalt paving), and zinc (motor oil, grease) in stormwater runoff during construction may also occur. Best management practices will be implemented to effectively drain and treat stormwater runoff during construction. No adverse effects are expected to the river or wetland community due to stormwater runoff.

Aquatic life uses in the portion of the river that will be disturbed during construction may be negatively impacted, but in time, they will recover and support approximately the same community structure as is now found in the existing channel. A mussel survey will be conducted by INHS prior to construction to determine if mussel beds exist within the project boundaries. Due to the size of the river, impacts to aquatic communities should be negligible.

Fate and Effect of Parameters Proposed for Increased Loading.

The increase in suspended solids, along with any increases in heavy metals, will be local and temporary. Erosion control measures will be utilized to minimize any increase in these disturbances and prevent further impacts to the river and the wetlands near the newly constructed bridge. The Applicant will purchase 1.074 acres of wetland credit from the Morris Wetland Bank in Grundy County, the result of 2.0:1 mitigation ratio applied to 0.537 permanently impacted wetland acres. The 0.226 acres of wetlands that are temporary impacted by the placement of crane mats and course aggregate for causeway construction will be fully restored. Photographic evidence taken before and after construction will be used to determine if all restoration efforts were successful. The applicant has proposed to purchase additional Morris Wetland Bank credits in the event restoration is not successful.

Purpose and Social & Economic Benefits of the Proposed Activity.

The proposed bridge project will replace the structurally deficient and functionally obsolete IL Route 178 Bridge over the Illinois River south of Utica. Upon completion of the project, IL Route 178 Bridge (#050-0256) will be reliable, safe, and meet current design standards. The bridge will maintain connectivity to Starved Rock State Park and Mathiessen State Park, meet the need of current and future river navigation, and the safety, emergency, and economic needs of the region.

Assessments of Alternatives for Less Increase in Loading or Minimal Environmental Degradation.

IDOT considered the four alternatives listed below and met with local elected officials to provide background information on the alternative roadway alignments. Two public meetings were held to present potential alternatives, review the project impacts, and receive public comments. The public overwhelmingly favored Alternative 4.

Alternative 1: Do Nothing

- Maintains existing bridge with no major repairs or improvements
- Deteriorating condition of the bridge superstructure (truss) would lead to posting weight limits
- The bridge would eventually have to be closed due to condition
- IL Route 178 Bridge links Utica with Starved Rock and Mathiessen State Parks
- Nearest alternative river crossing is the I-39 requiring a detour of approximately 11 miles
- Detour would lead to significant delays for emergency services for residents south of the river
- Does not meet the purpose and need of the project to provide a safe and reliable transportation link across the Illinois River that meets current design policy

Alternative 2: Build a new structure west of the existing alignment

- Construct replacement bridge approximately 49 feet (centerline to centerline) west of the existing bridge

- 49' offset minimum to allow the new bridge to be constructed alongside the existing bridge and keep the existing bridge open to traffic
- Existing rock quarry located at the north end of this alternative impacted
- Illinois Nature Preserve area located in the southwest quadrant of the bridge impacted
- Alternative not presented at public meeting due to the above mentioned impacts

Alternative 3: Build a new bridge on the existing alignment and remove the existing bridge

- Requires closure of current IL Route 178 Bridge for two years in order to demolish bridge and construct a replacement bridge in the same location
- Would not allow for access to and from Utica to Starved Rock State Park which attracts over 2 million visitors each year
- Would result in significant economic and safety impacts to the area
- Unacceptable option to the emergency responders and residents of Utica and surrounding areas

Alternative 4: Preferred Option: Build a new structure east of the existing alignment

- Construct replacement bridge approximately 49 feet (centerline to centerline) east of the existing bridge
- 49' offset minimum to allow the new bridge to be constructed alongside the existing bridge and keep the existing bridge open to traffic
- Avoids impacts to Illinois Nature Preserve area, the rock quarry, and additional wetlands located in the west alignment option
- Maintains traffic flow to Starved Rock and Mathiessen State Parks
- Favored by local officials and residents of Utica and the surrounding area

Alternative 4 provides the least amount of impacts to the natural or human environments and has the support of the local community and its leaders. It allows the current IL Route 178 Bridge to remain open during construction of the new bridge, which is vital for access to the two state parks and the economy of the area. Only the no build alternative would result in no environmental impacts or discharges to the river. This option is not viable due to the structural condition and the lack of functionality of the existing bridge.

Conclusion:

The construction of the proposed project will follow conditions set forth by the Agency and USACE. The completion of the bridge project is the most cost effective, viable means for replacing the existing obsolete IL Route 178 Bridge. Best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented prior to, during, and post-construction, staging areas for equipment wash down, repair, and maintenance will be designated, and structural BMPs for stormwater runoff will be implemented. Wetland mitigation of 1.074 acres of wetland credit from the Morris Wetland Bank has been proposed for the permanent loss of 0.537 acres of low quality wetlands.

Summary Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards or Other Entities

The Biological Resource Review Memorandum (dated January 19, 2012) coordinated survey results with IDNR. Upon review, IDNR concurred with the results and findings that no threatened and endangered species would be impacted. On March 1, 2016 the Illinois Department of Transportation issued a Natural Resources Review Update Memorandum indicating no new records of protected species are contained within the Illinois Natural Heritage Database for this project site, therefore consultation under Part 1075 was terminated. The memorandum states that a known bat hibernaculum within 2 miles of the project requires that no trees that are 5 inches in diameter or larger at breast height can be cleared from April 1st to November 15th. Also the memorandum states that in order to protect both the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat, a bridge bat inspection would need to be completed within one year of the bridge demolition.

Agency Conclusion.

This preliminary assessment was conducted pursuant to the Illinois Pollution Control Board regulation for Antidegradation found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code 302.105 (antidegradation standard) and was based on the information available to the Agency at the time this assessment was written. We tentatively find that the proposed activity will result in the attainment of water quality standards; that all technically and economically reasonable measures to avoid or minimize the extent of the proposed increase in pollutant loading have been incorporated into the proposed activity; and that this activity will benefit the community at large by replacing the structurally deficient and functionally obsolete IL Route 178 Bridge. Comments received during the 401 Water Quality Certification public notice period will be evaluated before a final decision is made by the Agency.